

Message Text

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42

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 A-01

OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 AID-05 USSS-00 OMB-01

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O P 281515Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5984

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 10906

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN BEKAA VALLEY TOWN OF
ZAHLE.

1. IN THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT SINCE THE END OF ROUND 3,
LARGE SCALE AND PROLONGED FIGHTING BROKE OUT AUGUST 28
IN THE TOWN OF ZAHLE, SEAT OF THE GOVERNORATE OF
BEKAA. AS OF LATE AFTERNOON AUGUST 28 THE SHOOTING HAD
REPORTEDLY DIED DOWN AND THE LEBANESE SECURITY FORCES
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HAD POSITIONED THEMSELVES BETWEEN THE ANTAGONISTS.

THE TOWN IS QUIET AS OF 1800 HOURS LOCAL BUT TENSIONS ARE HIGH IN THE AREA.

2. AS FAR AS WE CAN PIECE TOGETHER, THE FACTS AS OF 1800 HOURS AUGUST 28 ARE AS FOLLOWA:

3. THE TROUBLE HAD BEEN BREWING FOR SEVERAL DAYS. IT BEGAN AUGUST 26 AS A PRIVATE QUARREL IN A ZAHLE RESTAURANT THAT RESULTED IN ONE DEATH FROM A GRENADE EXPLOSION, AS WELL AS SEVERAL WOUNDED. THREE MEN WERE ARRESTED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. SINCE THE MAN KILLED WAS A MOSLEM AND THE MAN ARRESTED WERE CHRISTIANS, THIS QUICKLY AROUSED THE IRE OF LOCAL INHABITANTS OF THE PREDOMINANTLY CHRISTIAN TOWN OF ZAHLE. LARGE DEMONSTRATIONS OCCURED AUGUST 26 AND 27. THE AUTHORITIES RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO RELEASE ARRESTED MEN ON BAIL AUGUST 27, AND THE SITUATION TEMPORARILY DIED DOWN.

4. ABOUT 0300 AUGUST 28 SEVERAL CHRISTIAN SHOPS IN ZAHLE WERE BOMBED. THE TWONSPeOPLE REACTED IMMEDIATELY, AND FIGHTING STARTED THROUGHOUT THE TOWN AND IN AT LEAST ONE MOSLEM VILLAGE IN THE OUTSKIRTS. GOL SECURITY FORCES INTERVENED AND ARRANGED A CEASEFIRE THAT BECAME EFFECTIVE APPROXIMATELY 1400 HOURS AUGUST 28.

5. AS NEAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE THE SHOOTING MAINLY INVOLVED LOCAL INHABITANTS AND TOOK A MOSLEM VERSUS CHRISTIAN CHARACTER. IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER PALESTINIANS WERE INVOLVED.
GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT10906
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750298-0436
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975087/aaaaafic.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <29 MAY 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SERIOUS OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE IN BEKAA VALLEY TOWN OF ZAHLE.
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006